

PRIESTCRAFT DEFENDED,

A

S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE

EXPULSION

OF

SIX YOUNG GENTLEMEN

FROM THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

F O R

Praying, Reading, and Expounding the Scriptures

Humbly Dedicated to

Mr. V—C—r and the H—ds of H—s.

By Their Humble Servant,

THE SHAVER.

THE TENTH EDITION.

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C A N D I D R E A D E R.



YOU must know, my friend, that I am a gentleman in the country, and by craft a SHAVER of very considerable scope; though I have turned preacher of late and seem to be pretty successful at my preachments, as the sale of this sermon will testify. I have been a great man for the news as we Shavers commonly are, and among other fine papers, I usually took in the St. James's Chronicle, a paper that is filled in all the four corners, but if you ask with what: on my word, I must refer you to people of greater penetration than I am to find that out. Well I paid, and read to no purpose for a long while; but at last I chanced to spy An Extract of a Letter from Oxford, and I wot it pleased me mightily.

It told us how that Six young men were expelled the university for holding Methodistical tenets, and for praying, reading and expounding the scriptures in a private house. Well, thought I, that is well enough: but then I did not so much approve of the principal crime of those called Methodists, being said to be reading and expounding the scriptures, &c. thought I, that is going too far. But not long after I happened to see another account from Oxford, wrote by Oxoniensis, and that account made me resolve upon something. For he tells us, that one of the Six was formerly a Publican, another had been a Blacksmith, a third had been a Barber, and a fourth had been a Teacher in a School.

Well,

Well, You must know my grandfather was a publican, my uncle a blacksmith, and I myself am a shaver; which is by interpretation a barber; and my eldest son, a promising lad, is destined for a school-master. Therefore seeing the honours of our family cast down into the puddle by the arrogance of Oxonian priests, I began to grow surly upon it; but did not yet think of preaching. What brought me to that was finding from the learned Oxoniensis, that those young men preached without orders. Then, thought I, I will even have a Trial at it myself. Well, you must know we have a good sort of a fellow to our parson; a gentleman who loves his bottle and his friend, if it was for a whole night together, and there is never a youth in all the parish who will sing a merrier catch than himself, nor tell a prettier story: with him I am pretty familiar, and I thought I would even borrow his Sunday's stile, and his orthodox plan, knowing him to be a true churchman, and I would try what I could do at preaching. But I had certainly been disappointed in an audience if an happy imagination had not befriended me; but no sooner had I bestirred my imagination than I was waisted from Clarely Common to the great hall at O———, before the V——— C———, and the Heads of Houses, to whom, after I had mounted the rostrum with the usual formality, I preached the following sermon:

Concerning which I would have it observed,

1. That I pretend not to justify any part of the Methodists conduct, besides praying to God, reading, expounding the scriptures, and singing hymns, &c.

2. That I censure none of the clergy, but such as are against praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures; and singing of hymns.

3. That whoever this coat is found to fit, I would have the gentleman put it on and wear it, as his own: assuring himself that it was made for him, and that, though a shaver, I am his taylor.

4. That, perhaps, in gratitude for my great pains, and the new hints given in this sermon, which may cast a light upon ecclesiastical history, the V——— C———, and Heads of Houses, may present me to some good benefice. And they may depend on it that I shall shave the parishoners as handsome as any on 'em.

Thus, reader, I have told you all about it, and have only to add, that after I had at leisure hours wrote my sermon fairly out, I carried it to a book-seller, expecting, that he would be as fond of it as I was, which I believe is a case very common with us authors; but he drew up his shoulders, looked sour upon it, and said he feared it was too coarse for this polite age. But I assured him that the stile was quite clerical, being borrowed from the parish priest; and what he might bear in many pulpits if he would only travel for it; so he agreed to take my word rather than be at the expence and trouble of seeking for further proof, and it was sent to the press to furnish you with half an hour's entertainment, and please

Your humble servant,

THE SHAYER.



A

SERMON, &c.

Having the honour of addressing so learned a body, with bands so white, gowns so black, and caps so orthodox, I take the liberty of striking a little from the common road of preaching, and as this is a singular occasion I shall make free with a singular text.

You know, my beloved, it is the way of most preachers to choose some passage of scripture for their text, which having distinctly read twice over, you hear no more of the bible till the sermon is finished; but are entertained with such a lecture as you may find in a news paper, price two-pence half-penny. But I have the honour of departing a little from this general rule, and shall be the first who takes his text from a news-paper, and illustrates his doctrine by scripture-history, and having broken the ice, as we used to say, I expect to have many ingenious followers. You will find our text in the *St. James's Chronicle*, for Thursday, March 17, 1768. No. 1099. Printed by Henry Baldwin, at the *Printing-Office*, White Friars, Fleet-Street. Wherein, if you will pull your news-papers out of your pockets you may read with me the following paragraph.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT of a LETTER from OXFORD.

On Friday last six students belonging to Edmund-Hall were expelled the university, after an hearing of several hours, before Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and some of the Heads of Houses for holding Methodistical tenets, and taking upon them to pray, read, and expound the scriptures, and sing hymns in a private house. The — of the — defended their doctrines from the thirty-nine articles of the established church, and spoke in the highest terms of the piety, and exemplariness of their lives; but his motion was overruled, and sentence pronounced against them. Dr. —, one of the Heads of Houses present, observed, that as these six gentlemen were expelled for having too much religion, it would be very proper to enquire into the conduct of some who had too little; and Mr. — was heard to tell their chief accuser that the university was much obliged to him for his good work.

OUR text is, indeed somewhat too long, but then, my beloved, we have the more matter to work upon; and you know this is a day in which invention is not very brisk, especially among the gentlemen clergy. But,

We proceed to prosecute our subject after the old orthodox plan. Namely,

1. To go over our text by way of explication.
2. Deduce a notable point of doctrine from it, viz. That this act of the V—e C—r, and the Heads of Houses, is defensible from the conduct of the clergy in all ages, and in all countries.

3. Conclude with special application.

I. Explain our text. In doing which I must divide it into very small parcels, even as the skilfull surgeon does the flesh of a hanged malefactor, when he dissects an organ.— And in the

First place, *Extract of a Letter from Oxford.*

This *Oxford* my beloved, is a city in the West of *England* notable for a great university; i. e. a place of learning: and it would do you good to see the numbers of hopeful young gentlemen who come from all parts of *England* in pursuit of learning, insomuch that all the colleges are frequently crowded. But you will say, What do they learn? To which I answer in the negative, as being much easier than the affirmative. For it appears from our text that there are some things which they do not learn. (1st.)

(1.) Praying :—I mean, they do not, in common, learn to pray to God. It seems, this is no part of the approved exercises of the students in that university : for, says our text, *Six young gentlemen were expelled the university for praying.* From whence we may draw this inference : namely, That if the Vice Chancellor, and the Heads of Houses, expelled these six offenders for praying to God ; it is natural to suppose, that they are not guilty of that crime themselves : otherwise, they would fall under that reproof, *Rom. ii. 1.*

(2.) To read and expound the scripture, is another thing which seems to be there prohibited. Whether *Rocheſter's Poems, Tristram Shandy*, and such books are esteemed orthodox, and therefore tolerated, I pretend not to say ; but one thing is clear from our text, that reading and expounding the scriptures is against the *Oxonian* law : for *Six young gentlemen were expelled the university for reading and expounding the scriptures.*

(3.) Singing of hymns is another thing which they do not learn : this is also clear from the words. By singing of hymns, I mean praising of God for blessings received according to *Col. iii. 16.* *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* But singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, cannot be connived at in the university, by the Heads of Houses ; for *Six young men were expelled the university for singing of hymns.*

Note, This was an extract of a *Letter* from *Oxford* : which shews, that there be some people there who *can* write, notwithstanding all the reflections that have past upon them ; and that although reading is dangerous there, yet an *Oxonian* may write with impunity.

II. *Last Friday* :—the better day, the better deed. *Friday*, you know, is a fast-day ; on which it was fittest to go about a work of this importance ; when the judgment was not fettered with bodily grossness, but purged by an empty belly.

Last Friday : It was not a thing that happened in the dark ages of *Monkish Ignorance*, but what has happened in this enlightened age of *CHRISTIANITY*. It was not when the university was tied hand and foot by *Papish* prejudices, and the Heads of Houses were obliged to submit to their betters ;
but

but it was *Last Friday*, the act and deed of *Protestant Divines*.

III. *Six Students* !—What a miracle was it, my beloved, that, out of so many hundreds of students, as are at *Oxford*, only Six should be found guilty of praying, reading and expounding the scriptures. This shews the faithfulness of their vigilant tutors, in guarding them against such pernicious practices. Now from this, observe,

1. That there were but Six students of all the university, who could be detected in those evils of praying, &c. much to the honour of that learned body.

2. That those Six being expelled ;—now there are none left in all the colleges who take upon them to pray, read and expound the scriptures :—therefore, gentlemen may with safety send their sons to that fountain of learning, without fearing that they will become religious ;—there being none left now to ensnare them.

IV. They all belonging to *Edmund Hall*.—It seems they loved to be together : from whence it may be gathered that they loved one another. A fault which the Heathens accused the Christians of old with, but from which mankind in general are now pretty free. It appears as if this *Edmund-Hall* was the only place at *Oxford* in which praying people were to be found. But it is hoped that the governors of that Hall will be milder for their carelessness in suffering the students to read the bible and to enquire after religion, seeing it is contrary to the sense of this university.

V. *Were expelled the university*. Deprived of the rights and privileges of the king's loving subjects, or as the word signifies, they were drove out, forced away, and banished from the university. This religious act was performed by the Vice Chancellor after an hearing of several hours. I remember when bishop *Hooper* was sent for by queen *Mary* the pious bishop of *London*, and my Lord Chancellor being determined to have him burnt ; but yet to make a shew of justice they would give him a hearing, with all resolving not to swerve from their bloody design. So in like manner our venerable tutors were determined not to suffer praying persons to breathe the university air ; yet, being tied to form, they would give them an hearing.

An hearing of several hours.—Ah ! my beloved, you may see how remarkably the scriptures are fulfilled in this learn-

learned body of divines ; where it says, *Hear ye indeed but understand not, see ye indeed but perceive not.*

VI. We come to the crime for which they were expelled the university : and I wot it was an heinous crime indeed. This would appear without illustrating it from the Character of the expellers ; namely, Mr. Vice Chancellor, and the Head of Houses. But as I love to remove every hillock out of the way, for your better information, I shall explain it. What was their crime then, my beloved, think you ? Was it drinking ? No, no, it was not drinking, *for they were very temperate.* Was it whoring then, the common practice of many students ? No, it was not whoring neither ; for their lives are said to have been very exemplary. I wish, my beloved, it had been no worse. But what was it then ? Was it swearing, and fighting, and abusing their fellow students ? No, for they shunned the other students, as a wise man will *shun an attorney* : thus much may be gathered from our text, which intimates, *that they met together among themselves.* But it was *praying* : that, my beloved, was one part of their crime, *Six young men were expelled the University for praying.* For Mr. V—e C—r and the Heads of Houses will suffer no praying people to continue in the university.

Reading and expounding the scriptures was another part of their crime. But what in the name of the Pope, can students have to do with the scriptures ? What pity is it that the bible is not locked up in the Vatican. But letting that pass, we find that learning to expound the scriptures is no part of the employment of the students, *Six young men being expelled the university for reading and expounding the scriptures.*

What added to their guilt was, that they carried their religion to a *private house*. But what can *private* people have to do with religion, ought not they to do, as their forefathers did ; namely, give up their consciences and understandings to the guidance of their venerable priest ? Is it not enough that gentlemen in black know, & understand religion, but every private person must be dabbling in, it contrary to the sense of this university ? I wot, my beloved, that the clergy cannot thrive as they do, if every private house must become a worshipping temple ; but it is tho't there is little reason to fear this, seeing our text informs us that the doctors of the university are determined to prevent it, for *Six young*

young men were expelled the University for being religious in a private house.

VII. Another part of their crime was that they held *Methodistical tenets*. This same methodist, my beloved, is a cramp word, gathered out of old books, by men of learning, and applied to such who pray, read, and expound the scripture, and sing hymns in private houses. A people never to be tolerated by the clergy. You'll observe, that this same hard word, which the nation has long rung with, first of all was given to the sons of Esculapius as a name of honour, and about thirty years ago, was by learned men raised up as the witch of Endor (who seems to have been a clergy woman too) raised the ghost of old Samuel.

Those same sons of Esculapius were physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries in their day, but then they were quite immethodical, like the greater part of the old women in black prunella & white cambrick. For instance they had not the method of wearing large whigs, gold headed canes, and of wheeling about the streets in their chariots. And with respect to their physic and surgery, they were guided chiefly by the dictates of nature without the abstruse methods of art. At last there arose a great man and his name was *Galen*, a mighty man for dissecting of apes; for it ought to be observed, that in his days in Pagan lands, there were very few criminals who deserved death, and fewer still who were given to the surgeons. Well what should he do, think you; why, my beloved, being blest with better stars at his nativity, than his predecessors, he took their confused & immethodical practices & reduced them into method *i. e.* form and order. Well, this great man being principal of the College of Physicians, he taught his pupils to observe orderly rules, otherwise *method*, from whence his disciples were in honour called Methodists. So much for learning, now for doctrine.

Then my beloved the case stands thus; amongst the clergy there always have been a great number who did not love praying, singing of hymns, reading and expounding the scriptures, the like may be said of the students. What they aimed at was a good living without much work, and as one in a certain place says, *Those men care not if the Devil take the flock provided they can but get the fleece*. On the other hand, there have been some who loved to pray, to sing hymns, to read and expound the scriptures, who if they were

not permitted to do it in public houses or churches, would do it in private houses to the no small disgrace of the other gentlemen. Well, my beloved, these are they who have been called methodists, fanatics and enthusiasts. Now a word or two about their tenets, and then I dismiss this head, for really their tenets, being destructive of priesthood, must by no means be encouraged.

1. First, and foremost, they think that a man ought to attest no articles of faith, but what he believes to be true.

2. They think that a man ought not to profess to my Lord bishop that he believes all the thirty nine articles of the established church to be the true faith of the gospel when he secretly believes in his heart that they are false.

3. They think that a man should not profess to his lordship, that he is moved by the holy ghost to desire the office of a deacon, when he considers it in his heart as delusion and enthusiasm for any man to pretend to be moved by the holy ghost in these days.

4. They think that after a man has subscribed the thirty nine articles, and solemnly swore that he believes them, that he should not go and preach doctrines directly opposite to the said articles.

5. They think that no man ought to be permitted to enter the pulpit whose life and conversation is *dissolute*.

These with a great many tenets besides equally ridiculous to maintain, and therefore, though tolerated by the king and parliament, the Heads of Houses will never endure them in the university.

VIII. *The----of the-----defended their doctrines by the thirty-nine articles of the established church.*

I wot, I fear me much, that this doctor is himself tinged with methodistical tenets; for no body now a-days besides methodists, &c. consider the thirty-nine articles of the established church as any test of doctrine: as for the clergy it is well known that they are mostly *dissenters* from the doctrine of the articles and prayerbook. Ah! beloved, if the truth was known, it would be found that this same---- prays to God, and reads his bible, or how else should he take part with those young men whom the Heads of Houses expelled the university *for praying, reading & expounding the scriptures*. Besides he would not have spoken so highly of their piety & the exemplariness of their lives as the text

text tells us he did, seeing the sense of the university was, that their praying, reading, &c. was vicious. I fear me, my beloved, that if the Heads of Houses do not keep a good *look out* after this same doctor, it will be difficult for them to keep the university clear from such as pray, and read, and expound the scriptures; but *his motion was overruled*. What is one methodist among a host of divines?

Thus, my beloved, I have gone through the first part of my plan, and shall proceed to the second.

II. Namely, to raise a notable point of doctrine from it; which is this, viz. That the conduct of the Heads of the Houses, in expelling the six young men from praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures, is defensible from the conduct of the clergy of all ages and countries, whatsoever snarling persons may say.

To clear this I shall produce four instances, all of which I shall take out of that old antiquated book called the scripture. A book which sets forth the true spirit of the university doctors to the very life. The

1st. Of which instances we have in the book of Daniel, chap. iii. wherein some transactions of the established church at Babylon are recorded; concerning which I would make the following notes:

I. That the religion, by law established was the religion of the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, at the request of the clergy, made and set up in the plains of Dura. A place, my beloved, which, if we may give credit to travellers, very much resembles the plains of Oxford.

II. The clergy, who you know have always been wonderfully fond of a *golden god*, would by no means suffer an act of toleration to be passed in favour of methodists and dissenters; but on the contrary, got an act of parliament on their own side, enjoining the strictest uniformity in religion, and threatening death to all dissenters: for it seems this prince was too easy and like some of our former princes in England, was so much afraid of the clergy, that he was obliged to conform, and so espoused an act of uniformity, which they hoped would bring good grist to their mill, vers. 6.

III. This law established, the clergy were impatient to have the subjects of this great king brought to the test: which they thought best to do by appointing a public feast;

on which it was required that every man, and mother's son should fall down before, and worship this golden god set up by the king, as the tool of the parsons.

IV. That there were four degrees of learned men, whom, I suppose dwelt in the university at Babylon: first, there were *magicians*, who were with them, the same as doctors of divinity are with us in our universities: secondly, there were *astrologers*, or men of learned sciences, much the same with our masters of arts: thirdly, there were *forerers*, who I suppose, were either fellows of the college, or batchelors of arts, appointed to be tythe gatherers; and, fourthly, there were chaldeans or students of their divinity, and other fine arts: and,

V. That all those gentry were very vigilant in discovering and informing against dissenters, verse 8. *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jew.* That is to say, certain young students, being spurred on to it by their tutors who care not to appear in such a dirty affair themselves, and so forth.

VI. Strict as the law was, there were some who took upon them to pray to God, like those six young gentlemen who were expelled the university for praying. But what were they think you? why truly, they were dissenters and methodists, for they would not conform to the form of worship by law established, therefore were dissenters; and they were methodists, if praying to God denominates a man a methodist. But what followed, trow ye? why, as soon as they were found out to be non-conformists, the doctors of divinity accused them of rebellion; and had the king been as fond of burning dissenters, as their reverences were, these men had in a trice been executed, without having another chance for their lives: But he was not quite so fiery, but gave them another trial. If you'll read the chapter through you'll see the upshot of it, and how the doctors of the university were confounded, and the dissenters were readmitted to the king's favour, for God did work for them.

I pass on to the days of *Darius*: a prince who had a praying nobelman for his first minister of state, and, for ought I know to the contrary, he might be lord of the treasury, as well as the chancellor of the empire. His name was Daniel, and by birth a Jew. Well, my beloved, being so very great, he was grievously envied, by the inferior

inferior placemen, though they kept it secret, and spoke him fair to his face; and he was very much abused by those who were out of place. If we may judge of ancient times from what appears in ages more modern, we may suppose that the times took a turn something like the following.

One man cries out against his being a favourite, and too intimate with the queen or queen's mother, as their kinsmen do upon similar occasion; another complains of his being a foreigner, and a captive, so highly dignified, whilst the natives were neglected: perhaps their news-papers might be stuffed with clamours against the exotic favourite; and the incensed mob might be taught to cry out, liberty and Babylon for ever---but no Jew---no favourite---no captive. Well, my beloved, all the *inns* and *outs* might have fretted themselves to death, without being able to do any thing against this prime minister, this same Daniel, the king's favourite, if they had not applied to the principal clergy, the Heads of Houses. But I trow, the reverend doctors, the magicians, the masters of the art of astrology, &c. &c. no sooner embarked in the popular cause but they were more than a match for the favourite, who had fallen by means of their reverences, if the Almighty had as little to do with him, as he has to do with the greatest part of the clergy.

Well, my beloved, the Heads of Houses and the disaffected statesmen met altogether, and consulted what was the best way to overturn the state of this praying favourite. But the conduct of Daniel was so exemplary, that they knew they should be able to find nothing wrong in him, unless they could entrap him in matters of religion. Therefore having first persuaded the king, that *the church was in danger*, they urged the necessity of a law being made, prohibiting any man's praying unto God. Well, *Darius* the king, was not such a novice in politics but he knew the necessity of having the clergy on his side, and therefore though he could not see into that part of their mysterious divinity, made the decree according to the plan concerted by that learned body.

But it is thought that he would have strained a point with them, if he had known that they were aiming at the life of his faithful favourite.

But how stiff these biblists are? for this Daniel went on praying to God, reading and expounding the scriptures *in*

a private house, notwithstanding the king had under the direction of the clergy ordained otherwise; this was enough to have provoked the *Heads of Houses* to have expelled him the *University* had he belonged to it, but he not belonging to it, they were obliged to be satisfied with putting him to death without expelling him.

Now lest any should object to the clergy having the honour of devising this scheme, because there is no notice taken of them in history; let it be observed, that it was never known that many great men or noblemen were ever given to interfere in religious matters, and statesmen in all ages have been wise enough to take up with the religion which the priests have prescribed to them, therefore what you give of honour to any body in this affair, let it be given to the clergy. And I pass on to make a comparison betwixt that affair and this before us.

I. They could find no occasion of fault in Daniel; so it was with the six young men who were expelled the *University*, for their lives were said to be pious and exemplary.

II. They thought they might entrap him in some matters concerning the law of his God. So likewise, these young men though they were no whores, no gamblers, no drunkards, &c. yet they could be trapped in matters relating to their God.

III. This same Daniel notwithstanding the penalty denounced in the edict against any who should take upon them to pray to God, perversely, rebelliously, and obstinately persisted in his usual apostolical, puritannical, nonconformistical and methodist manner of praying to God in a private house. So no doubt but these six young men knew that it was against the will of the *Heads of Houses*, &c. that any of the students under their care should pray to God in a private house; for says our text, *Six young men were expelled the University, for praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures in a private house*; yet they persisted in it.

Lastly, under this head. Daniel president of the princes, kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as aforetime. But how will you be able to find such puritanic conduct among our British noblemen: for I wot that a praying nobleman is pretty near as great a rarity as a white crow upon Malvern hills. The

II. Instance of clerical conduct which gives countenance

to the late act of the Heads of Houses I shall bring from the clergy of that famous university at Jerusalem, in the days of Christ and his apostles. In the established church of Judea there were articles of faith and a canon law, which all the clergy profest to believe, regard and defend. This confession of faith was first compiled by Moses the founder of that church, and afterwards ratified and confirmed by Ezra and Nehemiah, their two principal reformers; even as the thirty nine articles of the established church were ratified and confirmed by our English reformers. I know you'll be ready to think that the clergy deemed it an honour to tread in the steps of those pious reformers; but I trow, my beloved, ye are greatly mistaken; for the *Heads of Houses* of the university at Jerusalem, even did as many others have done since, make the commandment void to establish their own traditions. Perhaps you will be ready to startle like the cows in July, when bit by the envious flies, when ye hear of a university at Jerusalem: but I assure you, it was there that the doctors (i. e. teachers) of the law dwelt, and their law was their divinity. Now, where do the neighbouring dogs delight to resort so much as to a place where the carcase is, or where shall we see such swarms of reverend doctors as at the university. Those pharisees, those lawyers, those scribes, and those doctors were all gownsmen, but whether they wore the very same uniforms with the gentlemen of Oxford university, my author does not say. Yet thus much may be gathered from the history, that if that wandering Jew who they say has lived ever since the times I am speaking of, should chance in his travels to call at Oxford, he would think upon his longevity that from the manners of the men it was old Jerusalem risen again from its ruins. But we will drop this, and come to the matter in hand, which is to give a just account of those clergy, that you may see that the heads of houses have not departed a jot from the rules of their clerical ancestors.

The Jerusalem clergy finding that their living depended upon subscribing the articles given by Moses, and the homilies compiled by the prophets; they could for the sake of a venerable reputation, and a fattish living, or, as ye would say, *for the good of the church*, very readily subscribe, and attest them upon oath, though many of them, called *saducees*, did not believe any thing about them. Now not

to take notice of the vulgar opinion, namely, that there are a great many sadducees in our universities; I cannot but observe the weakness of those who blame such of the clergy who swear to articles they do not believe, seeing that was the practice of the clergy of the first established church that was in the world.

About something more then 1700 years since, there arose some dissenters who made a great stir among the people, and brought great uneasiness upon the clergy. I do not mean that those were dissenters from the articles of faith which was of old given to the saints; but they were dissenters from the clergy, and did not spare to detect their errors, both in principles and practice; a practice which our modern methodists are said to be guilty of, to the great concern of the Heads of Houses.

Those were laymen, not regularly educated at the university, and who took upon them to preach without receiving authority from the archbishop of Jerusalem; I think his name was Caiaphas, and I wot he was primate of all Judea. Well, those men were not only laymen, but the riff-raff of them, even fishermen: note, they were not attorneys or merchants clerks; nor were they chymists, nor apothecaries, but fishermen. And yet they preached, and yet they expounded the scriptures, to the great confusion of the holy trade of priesthood. The established church was now thought to be in danger. And how it could be thought so was something strange, seeing those praying and preaching dissenters proved all their doctrine from the articles and homilies given by Moses and the prophets, the same as our modern methodists prove their doctrines from the articles and homilies of the church of England; and the church of England has been thought in no small danger from these same methodists, upon ground equally substantial. Believe me my beloved, the reverend, the learned, the zealous doctor Sacheverel, was not the first nor the last, who was grieved for fear of the church. But he is dead and gone, therefore I return to the clergy at Jerusalem; and ye cannot but remember how active they were in procuring the destruction of Jesus Christ, and when he was risen from the dead and ascended into glory, they abated nothing of their zeal for their established church.

For no sooner were they aware of the power of the apostles
C doctrine,

doctrine, (by apostles I mean those who took upon them to pray, read, and expound the scriptures in private houses, as you may see in the subsequent part of the history) as these six young men who were expelled the university are said to have done. Seeing, I say, their extraordinary fervour in preaching, they cried out against them as persons drunk with new wine, by which we may understand *enthusiasm*. Acts ii. 13. Well, my beloved, this is the very cry of the clergy against all such as preach Jesus and the resurrection, and from their mouths the vulgar catch the sound; so that with many, a methodist, an enthusiast, a dissenter, and a fanatic, are thought to be synonymous terms. From hence we may learn that slander may as well be thrown in a sermon as in a farce, and will issue with as good a grace from a pulpit as from a theatre. But no more of this, because our time draws towards the other end.

It is very remarkable how zealous those of the gentlemen of the gown, who aimed no higher than a good fat benefice, have always shewed themselves when the doctrine of Christ in its simplicity hath been preached: for why? truly because it lays the ax to the root of the tree of priestcraft, and throws down the importance of the parson into the dirt. If the clergy were all to observe the rules given by Christ to his disciples in his sermon upon the mount, where would be all their riches and grandeur, their coaches, their liverymen, and their plate? But ye know, that these rules are different from this craft, whereby we parsons get our wealth, as heaven is different from hell. But as priestcraft is lucrative, it will be sure to find supporters, whilst the houses have got one head left upon them.

In Acts v. we find that Peter and the rest of his praying, reading, and scripture-expounding brethren, were brought before the Vice Chancellor and the Heads of Houses for a hearing, and after a hearing of several hours they took counsel to slay them, v. 33. But there was one Gamaliel, the head of a certain house who sided with them, and probably proved their doctrine from the articles of the Jewish church as by law established. I trow this same Gamaliel was tinctured with the doctrine they preached, as---of---who defended the faith of the six young men who were expelled the university of---for praying, &c. may be supposed secretly to have
believed

believed in the articles which he once subscribed, though he dared not to avow his faith openly.

There is one thing in the account that is something remarkable, namely, the wise motion of doctor Gamaliel overruled the bloody designs of the priests; but it was not so at the other university, for altho' — of — defended and proved the methodistical doctrine from the articles of the church, and spoke highly of the piety and exemplariness of their lives, his motion was over-ruled and the six young men were expelled.

Another thing we may take notice of, namely, those ancient doctors had a law by which they could put people to death for praying, reading, & expounding the scriptures; but our universities have no such law, or it is no way doubtful but that the same zeal which will, under a protestant government, expel the students of the university for praying &c. would, for the same reasons, burn offenders at a stake, were they favoured with a popish king. So that if the Heads of Houses were less bloody in their designs than their ancestors, it is not to imputed to want of good-will, but to the protestant restraints which they are under.

It would be endless, my beloved, to point out all the instances in which the Jewish, and the — clergy agree; I shall therefore leave them to another occasion, and shall pass on to another very famous church, in that part of the world and after that I shall come nearer home, within our own ken. And,

III. This famous church was the church of Diana, at Ephesus; and I wot, in this church there was many a good living in the gift of the university, and I trow, that the Heads of Houses were very careful that none should enjoy one of them unless he was well known to be a true son of the church, that is to say, a promoter of the sale of the shrines of Diana, and a worshipper of the image that fell down from Jupiter.

This Diana was in her day, a lady remarkable for hunting of stags, and ever since, her clergy have been as remarkable for the hunting of (not stags but) a good benefice. Now, my beloved, this same huntress was the personage worshipped by most people of Asia, and she had many, very many clergy, who adored her for the sake of gain: *for by this craft we have our wealth*, said they.

There

There was a famous university for the training up of young gentlemen in the holy craft of making shrines for the goddesses, and a lucrative craft they found it my beloved, for they had it in their power to sell a brazen shrine for a golden prize; a thing which others besides them practise.

This university was at Ephesus, a very populous city, where water was cheap, but fire very dear; and here were many colleges and halls for the training up of young men in the craft of *getting wealth*. Every hall had a Head, and over all the Heads of Houses was a Vice Chancellor, the rev. Dr. Demetrius by name. As for praying, reading, & expounding the scriptures they meddled not with them, but were to the highest degree, intent upon getting wealth.

Well, they carried on this craft for many years, till at last there came some itinerant preachers to town, who made it their business to pray to God, to read, and expound the scriptures, and sing hymns in private houses, contrary to the sense of that university. This was no small mortification to the clergy, who very well knew that if real religion, or praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures was tolerated, that it would put an end to their lucrative priestcraft, and their reverences would fall into disgrace. But to prevent such a catastrophe the reverend Dr. Demetrius, Vice Chancellor, assembled the Heads of Houses to consult what was best to be done; and it was resolved *nemine contradicente*, to cry out, *the church was in danger*, that under pretence of saving this church, they might save their own profits. Well, they cried out, that *the church was in danger*, that *the church was in danger*, till they had sufficiently inflamed the rabble, then they laid hold on the itinerants, had them before the Heads of Houses, who gave them such treatment as praying people may expect to meet with from the clergy of the —. It happened however, as in a late case, that there was one man of integrity and honour amongst them, much like the Head of — Hall, only with this difference, the one was a Notary public, and the other is a gentleman in holy orders. Well, this attorney it seems being recorder of the city, thought that the clergy carried their authority a little beyond the rules of moderation and decency, a thing by no means uncommon for some gentlemen of the cap and gown. This town-clerk took up the cause of his itinerants, and in a spirited, sensible manner, defended their conduct

conduct and tenets, not from the thirty-nine articles but from the articles of natural religion and morality, and spake very highly of their piety and good behaviour. I cannot but remark that in this affair the town-clerk was more successful than the gentlemen who pleaded the cause of the six methodists at Oxford; the former over-ruled the purposes of Diana's clergy; but the university clergy over ruled the motion of the latter, according to our text: for though he defended their doctrine from the thirty-nine articles of the established church, and spoke very highly of their piety and the exemplariness of their lives, *these six young men were expelled the university for praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures, and for singing hymns in a private house.* For why? why truly, my beloved, because praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures is not the craft by which we get our wealth. For proof of this proposition I refer you to stubborn facts; namely, that you shall seldom see a divine who makes a point of praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures, and of singing hymns in private or public houses, who keep their equipages, or possess your fat livings. I wot, my beloved, that one drone eats more honey than four laborious bees; for proof of this I refer you to the reverend Dr. Pliny, an author of approved merit and a great divine.

But I pass on to the fourth established church, the clergy of which, in all respects, possessed the spirit of university divines, or Heads of Houses; and I trow, it is a church of great pretensions, the clergy of which are as infallible as the most holy mother pope Joan that lady, who was Christ's vicar, and Peter's successor, and carried the keys of heaven, hell, and purgatory in her pocket, when she was in her prime, and her moon shone at full. I guess by this time you know that I mean the good old, one catholic, roman, infallible, pontifical, universal, mother church, in the bosom of which our fore-fathers of the surcingle slept so snug, wrapt about with abbey lands as with warm blankets. And if I may speak the sentiments of my sable brethren of the university, we wish for the sake of those lands, that we were all safe rolling in her bosom once more. But I will not keep you in suspense about this.

IV. Church the conduct of whose clergy was so near a kin to the conduct of the clergy of ———. In the days of
Betsey,

Betsey, the vestal queen, the clergy suffered great discontent. For why? because praying, reading and scripture expounding people were suffered to live, and were even tolerated in the university, which was a kind of counterbalance to the emolument their reverencies had enjoyed in the days of Mary of scarlet memory, for as soon as this orthodox lady had ascended the throne, matters took a very agreeable turn, and the right reverend bishops, Bonner and Gardiner began to work for the good of the church. Like true bred D—D—s they searched every corner of the land for matters to work upon; and who should they pitch upon, trow ye but those ministers and others who prayed to God, read, and expounded the scriptures, and sung hymns? For those clergymen were much like unto others, they discouraged praying to any besides saints of their own cannonization; and as for the scriptures, they found it for their interest that the sense of them should be concealed. And no doubt other people of the same practices have reasons equally ponderous to assign for their conduct.

Who was Cranmer, my beloved? Why truly, though he was primate of England, he took upon him to pray, read and expound the scriptures, and as one such, according to the laws of Trent council, he was expelled the convocation and burnt to death, as an enemy to the clergy, Latimer, and Ridley, and Hooper, and Taylor, and Bradford, and Hunter, and Philpot, &c. &c. &c. were all of them guilty of those heinous offences of praying, of reading, of expounding the scriptures, and of singing of hymns. The same crimes with which the Oxford methodists were charged, and for which they were expelled the university.

Thus, beloved, I have with much pleasure gone so far thro' with my first proposed plan, and from what I have advanced we may raise the following remarks; 1. That the spirit of our D—D—s has been the same in all ages, a noble spirit of opposition to methodistical tenets. The magicians, the astrologers, the forcerers, and the chaldeans, the scribes, the pharisees, the lawyers, the sadducees, and the doctors, and the shrine-makers, and the inquisitors, and the roman bishops, and the vice chancellors, and the heads of houses, a e all of the same religion; namely to *oppose praying, reading, and expounding of the scriptures.*

2. That

2. That the state of religion in our land is likely to be soon upon a very respectable footing, seeing no more than six, out of the vast number of students at Oxford, took upon them to pray to God, to read, and to expound the scriptures; so that it is hoped the many parishes in England, will be likely to have parsons who will let their parishioners have their own way, and go quietly to hell without disturbing of them. Whereas was not care taken to suppress praying people in the university, we should have the nation swarming with them, much to the detriment of p---c---ft.

3. It is observable that we have found out more fully what four of those six gentlemen were, ere they set foot in the university; one was a publican, another a smith, a third a barber, and a fourth a teacher, under W---, as it is written by the reverend Dr. Oxoniensis, Gazetteer, No. 12199, April 8, 1768, and I wot, my beloved, though my kindred are professors of such arts they are to be held as dangerous sciences; therefore must not be tolerated by the clergy.

1st. And foremost, the clergy has suffered much discontent from the blacksmith, and whilst the bitterness of the loss of the abbey lands belcheth from our stomachs, we prunella gentlemen will never forgive the blacksmiths. Quere, For why? Ans. Because he was a blacksmith's son, lord Thomas Cromwell by name who stripped the church, that is to say, the clergy, of those warm, those fat abbey lands. No more blacksmith's I pray you now—we'll have none of them. Therefore Mr. V—e C——r did well in expelling the man because he had been a blacksmith.

2. One other of them was a publican, *i. e.* a tax gatherer, and I suppose, M. V—C——r thought that the difference betwixt *tax gathering* and *tythe gathering*, being so very trifling, that after a young man had sufficiently learned at home to gather taxes, it was quite needless for him to come to the university to learn to *gather tythes*. I wot, my beloved, that the old grudge betwixt the pharisees and the publicans has not yet subsided. For, as the learned *Oxoniensis* observes, the V—C—— expelled a man, the university, for having been a publican.

3. And in the next place another had been a *barber*, That is to say a *shaver*. Believe me it is dangerous to play with edge tools, and razors are keen things; but keenness must not be admitted at O—d. A *shaver* if tolerated, might

might be as bad as a blacksmith; but no more of this, we'll have no more shavers, my beloved.

4. A fourth was a teacher in a school, under W—y. But who, or what, this same W—y is, whether an hill, an old abbey, an holy college, or an oak-tree, the accurate *Oxonienfis* does not say. But this schoolmaster who taught under it, be it what it will, was justly expelled. For why? Because he departed so very far from the rule established among students. The common rule observed by the hopeful young gentlemen of the gown is, before they have so much as learned the first lesson of themselves, they conclude that they are able to teach others; witness so many a dull parson. But this man though he had been accustomed to teach others, meanly debased himself, so far as to receive instructions from others; but such a mean opinion of one's self being no way likely to add weight to the importance of the parson, must not be tolerated. I shall not now say any more; intending ere long to write a commentary on the gospel of Oxford, as written by the learned, the just, the accurate, and the reverend doctor *Oxonienfis*.

F I N I S.

